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# Lawmaker Tries to Explain Internment Camp Remarks

From Associated Press

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RALEIGH, N.C. -- Rep. Howard Coble, attempting to clarify remarks he made last week, said Monday that the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II was wrong and should not be repeated.

"I regret that many Japanese and Arab Americans found my choice of words offensive because that was certainly not my intent," said Coble, a Republican from North Carolina.

A colleague, Rep. Michael M. Honda (D-San Jose), said that Coble "still missed the point."

"He may have appeared to apologize for offending people with his words, but what's offensive is he doesn't get it," Honda said in a telephone interview. "He doesn't understand why it was wrong for [President Franklin] Roosevelt to do it then."

On Feb. 4, Coble appeared on a radio call-in show in Greensboro and disagreed with a caller who said Arab Americans should be sent to internment camps during the war on terrorism.

He added that the camps served the nation's security needs during WWII because a few Japanese Americans might have been intent on harming America, "just as some Arab Americans are probably intent on doing us harm today."

Coble said it was "a very, very cruel thing to do" to Japanese Americans but that he believed the decision was right for those times.

Besides removing a possible security threat, the government sought to protect Japanese Americans from harm by other Americans who were seething about Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, Coble said.

On Monday, Coble said he was trying to show that Roosevelt made a decision he believed was in the best interest of national security, based on the circumstances at the time and the information available.

"Today we can certainly look back and see the damage that was caused because of this decision," Coble said. "We all now know that this was in fact the wrong decision and an action that should never be repeated."

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